Sexing the city

The sexual production of non-heterosexual space in Belfast, Manchester and San Francisco

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In this paper, Rob Kitchin develops a Foucaultian analysis of the sexual production of non-heterosexual space, tracing out the contingent and contested nature of socio-sexual relations in three cities: Belfast, Manchester and San Francisco. For each city, a basic historical and geographical analysis is produced, charting how discursive and material processes enacted by state and citizens and operating at different scales (region, nation) are grounded locally in particularized ways; how local nuances created through varying social, economic and political context and events create contingent and relational systems of regulation, self-regulation and resistance that manifest themselves in differing socio-spatial productions.

"Belfast is one of the trickiest places I have ever come across to be gay." (Jonathon)

Over the course of a research project[1] concerned with the spatialized nature and effects of homophobia in Belfast, Northern Ireland, it became clear that the discursive and material practices that shape the regulation and policing of sexual dissidents[2] in the city, while similar in many respects to those operating elsewhere, have resulted in a particularized production of space. Belfast, a city with a population of over 600,000 and serving a hinterland of another million, has extremely limited, visible gay space (for example, it only has two gay bars). So, why is Belfast seemingly different to other Western cities? And how similar is the non-heterosexual sexual production of space across locales — is Belfast the odd city out, or is there considerable variation between places? In other words, what degree of specificity exists in the sexual production of space? If widespread variation exists, why?

To date, there have been a number of studies that have examined socio-sexual relations in particular locales, either documenting situations at particular moments in time or tracing out changes over time (see Whittle, 1994a; Bell and Valentine, 1995; Beemyn, 1997; Ingram *et al.*, 1997; Higgs, 1999 for edited collections). These studies have generally focused on the lives of sexual dissidents and development and sustenance of socio-sexual networks and subcultures within a city (although some work relates to rural areas; see Phillips *et al.*, 2000), and the contestation over space, particularly centring on resistive acts and the formation of visible gay space. From this work, a number of analysts have sought to theorize the relationship between sexuality, society and space.

Initial studies, focused on the formation and development of so-called 'gay ghettos' in American cities, developed an urban sociological perspective that posited that 'ghettos' could be explained through push–pull models, centred on reasons of defence and comfort, and were the result of rational

decision-making by their constituents. For example, Castells (1983) proposed that gay men seek to live in social environments where they will not be conspicuous, notably run-down inner-city areas. Lesbians, he hypothesized, tend not to emphasize notions of territoriality, placing more emphasis on personal relationships, and in combination with reduced mobility due to generally being poorer, do not seek to create spatial concentrations.

Castells's thesis was criticized by those who claimed that it neglected the complex structural, material and discursive practices that shape society. They noted that the areas in which gay people concentrated were most often not 'chosen', they were marginal sites in the urban fabric where heteronormative[3] conditions were relatively weak. So-called 'gay spaces' were, and often continue to be, contested sites, situated in a web of complex power geometries. Moreover, evidence details that lesbians do form spatially concentrated communities, but they generally have a "quasi-underground character . . . and do not have [their] own public subculture and territory" (Adler and Brenner, 1992, p. 31; Peake, 1993; Valentine, 1995). Valentine (1995) thus argued that while lesbians rarely leave any trace of their sexualities on the landscape, lesbian spaces do exist if you know what you are looking for (see Rothenburg, 1995 and Kennedy and Davis, 1993 for other accounts). This 'quasi-underground character' is the result of various discursive and structural factors, such as fear of attack and familial and community ostracization, lack of financial resources and security, and ties such as being a main carer.

Attempting to account for structural processes, Lauria and Knopp (1985) and Knopp (1990a, 1990b, 1995) explained the formation of gay space in many US cities in political-economic terms. For example, Lauria and Knopp (1985) examined the role of gay men in the gentrification and urban renaissance of marginal city space. They contended that the concentration in, and transformation of, space by gay men is a search for power,

giving rise to particular spatial expressions of gay oppression. In later work, Knopp (1998) widened his analysis to consider the intersections of political and cultural politics in how gay space is created and sustained. Using an analysis of five cities (New Orleans, USA; Minneapolis, USA; London, UK; Edinburgh, UK; Sydney, Australia) he detailed the specificity of non-heterosexual place-production. In the USA, the territorialization of space was gained, he argued, through political and economic struggles through the infiltration of mainstream institutions. Whilst specific strategies were diverse, institutional power was seen as being central to the creation and maintenance of gay space. In Minneapolis, gay space was primarily gained through political negotiation, whereas in New Orleans it was gained through financial institutions and gay entrepreneur investment. London, however, is characterized by strategies of creating the homoeroticization of certain sites across the city rather than the creation of large-scale gay spaces. Here, political movements are more concerned with culture and identity than territorialization. In Sydney, he suggested that a liberal society means that there is less need to fight for gay civil rights, and gay men and lesbians are now engaged in a process of 'success management'. Quilley (1997), however, warned that is important to remember that the development of gay space is bound up in political and economic processes that extend beyond the agency and political manoeuvrings of gay men, such as state and institutional policy. In other words, developments might not simply be an outcome or response to resistive actions by the gay community.

Recently, theorists have drawn on psychoanalytic and poststructural ideas to explain the sexual production of space. In both cases, the emphasis has been on examining how sexuality has been used as a marker for the (re)production of landscapes of exclusion, and for understanding how difference has material effects in how sexual dissidents' use of space is regulated by society and state.

Psychoanalytic accounts posit that sexual identity emerges through the 'interactions between Self and Other, with feelings of attraction and repulsion entering the unconscious only to be projected back on to Others who become objects of desire or disgust' (Hubbard, forthcoming). The emergent sexual identity, and its boundaries of Self/Other, create notions of sexual difference that then mediates interactions in space and how others are conceptualized and treated, shaping social orders and the production of space (see Pile, 1996; Papayanis, 1999; Nast, 2000).

Poststructural theorists have forwarded non-essentialist conceptions of sexual identity that challenge the notion that 'sexual orientation is a culture-independent, objective and intrinsic property' that exists across time and space as a universal phenomenon (Stein, 1992, p. 325). Instead, drawing on the key writings of Foucault (1978) and Butler (1990), it is posited that sexuality is a social regulatory framework that is maintained through discursive formations (interlocking, back-referring sets of discourses — political rhetoric, religious doctrine, medical theory, censorship, sex education, and moral campaigns and panics) that are brought into being, reproduced and performed by individuals and state, and which have material expressions. Such a discursive formation is heteronormativity, whose power is reflected in its ability to essentialize and reproduce those adopting sexual roles or seeking sexual experiences that are not heterosexual as deviant, unnatural, abnormal and immoral. Here, it is recognized that the state is not neutral in the naturalization/normalization of heterosexuality, with heteronormative constructions woven into state ideology, discourse and practices (e.g. legislation, welfare entitlements) and grounded through notions of citizenship. Viewed as a social regulatory framework, it is contended, allows a recognition of the ways in which same-sex desire has had different cultural meanings at different times and in different places; that how we view and understand sexuality is historically and spatially contingent, changing over time and space. Moreover, it recognizes that discursive and material practices operate unevenly and unequally across people and place, and that the sexual production of space is never fixed, but is constantly in a process of becoming (Kitchin and Lysaght, in press). Understanding the sexual reproduction of space within a locale then necessitates the tracing out of geographies of power, and how discursive formations are reproduced and challenged.

These differing theories have been enormously productive for understanding the sexual production of space, and in this paper I seek to add to the debate through a comparison of three cities whose sexual landscape differs markedly: San Francisco, Manchester and Belfast. The approach used is Foucaultian in design, using basic historiographies to trace out the complex intertwining of regulation, self-regulation and resistance at each locale, and to demonstrate how these processes were mapped on to each city to produce particularized sexual(ized) landscapes. This approach has been chosen as it recognizes the non-essentialist and performative nature of sexual identity and the different experiences of sexual dissidents within a city — that heterosexism operates uneven and unequally across space (see Kitchin and Lysaght, in press), while being mindful of the need for macro-scale analysis of how discursive, material and structural practices operate more broadly.

Sexing the city: a Foucaultian analysis

> "Hence, too, my main concern will be to locate the forms of power, the channels it takes, and the discourses it permeates in order to reach the most tenuous and individual modes of behaviour, the paths that give it access to the rare or scarcely perceivable forms of desire, how it penetrates and controls everyday pleasure — all this entailing effects that may

be those of refusal, blockage, and invalidation, but also incitement and intensification: in short, the 'polymorphous techniques of power'." (Foucault, 1978, p. 11)

As noted above, Michel Foucault's writing has been enormously influential in shaping thought about the relationship between sexuality and society. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1978) produced an initial account of how power as a productive process is bought to bear on sexuality, charting in broad terms how relatively open and frank attitudes towards sexuality in the 17th century were transformed so that by the end of the 19th century sexuality was ostensibly repressed due to an explosion in discourses about sexuality (e.g. legal, medical, religious) that sought to render sexuality visible and open to systems of regulation and control. In doing so, Foucault revealed how interlocking, back-referring moral discourses and mechanisms of prohibition, censorship and denial were interwoven with, and underpinned by, emerging legal, medical and religious thought, and grounded through the practices of institutions such as schools, hospitals, churches and police forces; how these discourses fostered societal, familial and self-regulation; and in turn were undermined and resisted by sexual dissidents.

In particular, Foucault's concept of power was influential. He was critical of the notion that power is held solely by the 'dominant', used to police, prohibit and censor, and that it is countered oppositionally through resistance: "there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations" (p. 94). Instead he posited that

> "[power] is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere ... power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the

name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society." (Foucault, 1978, p. 93)

Given the lack of a binary relationship between domination and resistance, Foucault argued that power is "something that is exercised by everyone, [and] is potentially productive and at the heart of all social relations", that "power is not something to be overthrown, but rather be used and transformed" (Cresswell, 2000, pp. 261, 264). This conceives of power not as a 'thing' held by certain affluent people and groups, but a process involving flows, movements and relations between all types of people and things; "power is a strategic terrain, the site of an unequal relationship between the powerful and powerless" (Storey, 2001, p. 78). Drawing on Foucault's work, Sharp *et al.* (2000) thus argue that power is not merely acts of domination countered by acts of resistance, as in other accounts of power, but is much more complex and messy, bound up in everyday practices of living. As Foucault noted:

> "we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies." (1978, p. 100)

He thus argued that attention should be paid to the 'micro-physics' of power, how power is operationalized and brought to bear on people across a range of contexts and how multiple agencies seek to effect changes in the conduct of others (whether seeking to regulate or resist). This has led to analysis of the complex and often contradictory interplay between processes of regulation, self-regulation and resistance.

At the heart of disciplinary power are social, institutional and governmental systems of regulation. Drawing on a range of discursive formations, including at present heteronormativity, these systems aim to

monitor and police social relations, positing that social stability lies in individual and public morality (Weeks, 1981). For Foucault, such governance and "carefully analytical discourse was meant to yield multiple effects of displacement, intensification, reorientation, and modification of desire itself" (1978, p. 23) with discursive strategies operationalized through material practices aimed at maintaining order and control. These material practices range from legislative measures, policing and the administering of punishment, the structuring of the welfare system, denial of civil rights, denial of services (e.g. obtaining life insurance or endowment mortgages), the vandalism of property, intimidation, abusive phone calls and physical attacks. These practices explicitly discipline sexual bodies, reinforcing boundaries between normal, sexual relations and deviant relations, shaping attitudes and expectations, and thus legitimating their reproduction. Discursive formations thus mean that heteronormative relations are reproduced as normal, moral and commonsensical through everyday expressions and images of sexuality in the home, on the street, in the media, in legislature and so on.

Moreover, as the discursive regime shapes subject identification, the Self in turn reproduces the hegemony of the regime's discourses through self-regulation and disciplining. Foucault (1978, p. 155) notes that "each individual exercises surveillance over and against himself". This implies we constantly monitor and think about our own (sexual) actions because we are concerned with how others will see and judge us *and* how we see and judge ourselves against our own moral values (here guilt and shame of sexual transgression lead to self-disciplining). In other words, sexual dissidents are not simply victims of the operations of power, but are produced by those same operations (Jagose, 1996). Discursive formations and the practices of the state influence and shape an individual into self-disciplining and policing their desire. For example, instruction manuals, medical guidebooks, medical and religious treatises, national policy documents, all work to inform individuals about 'acceptable' and moral sexuality and encourage them to adopt 'sanctioned' moral values through the cultivation of an 'ethics of the self'. Here, Foucault recognized that tactics of power (technologies of the self) entice people to participate in forms of self-surveillance, suggesting that there is a interiorization of power: power acts as a disciplining process operating in more subtle ways to reenforce more direct forms of regulation.

However, the (re)production of discursive formations is a multifaceted process and so is always open to resistance and change. Processes of regulation and self-regulation then are always open to transformation: "where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault, 1978, p. 95). Indeed, it is clear that hegemony is not static: "relations of power-knowledge are not static forms of distribution, they are 'matrices of transformation'" (p. 99). For example, throughout the 19th and 20th centuries there were tensions between conservative, liberal and radical visions of sexual morality: "the first asserting the importance of absolute moral standards; the second by and large seeking relaxation within a traditional framework of family values; the third advocating a transformation of values" (Weeks, 1981, p. 14). These positions basically fit on a continuum of social intervention through to individual freedom. Resistance occurs across scales from global movements to individual households and is plural in nature, taking many forms, overt and subtle, that do not always directly counter specific acts of oppression. Examples of explicit, overt and transgressive strategies include gay pride parades, kiss-ins, demonstrations, forming support and service organizations, seeking political power, creating gay spaces, writing literature, 'outing' media celebrities, and taking legal action to amend and annul legislation. Resistance also extends to include the everyday strategies used to lead an everyday life but do not necessarily openly challenge anti-gay policing. These include subtle, coded, subversive and often

hidden strategies to appropriate and produce space in alternative ways such as recoding a space through dress, body language and performance (which might not be recognized by others occupying that space, but nonetheless carves out and materializes, maybe only fleetingly, gay space).

In the remainder of the paper, a macro-scale Foucaultian analysis is applied to three cities, tracing out the interplay of processes of regulation, self-regulation and resistance, in an effort to account for the ways the sexual production of non-heterosexual[4] space varies across locales.

San Francisco

Today, San Francisco is widely known as a 'gay Mecca'. This label, however, is a relatively recent phenomenon, the result of the city's specific history as Boyd (1997), D'Emilio (1983, 1989), Stryker and van Buskirk (1996) and Wright (1999) illustrate. In their analysis of the sexual history of the city they seek to chart the transformation from a "haven for sex deviates" to a "gay capital" (Boyd, 1997, p. 74), whilst providing accounts that recognize the contingent, complex and situated queer histories of the city.

San Francisco has, since its inception, been popularly conceived as a wide-open town, founded on a frontier ethic and with a tradition of vice. From its earliest days the city developed a permissive culture of sex centred on its boomtown entertainments and turn-of-the-century tourist economies (Boyd, 1997; Wright, 1999). In the late 19th century, the city was predominantly male, rich, cosmopolitan, supported a large transient population, had a high number of boarding houses and one-room flats, and sustained widespread vice-industries such as prostitution and gambling. These factors opened up opportunities for sexual dissidents to meet and have sexual relationships. Indeed, given the large percentage of men (Wright reports 92% for the Gold Rush era) it was not uncommon for men to act as, or

dress as, women for social activities such as dances. Given the particular socio-spatial situation of the city, and the homosocial[5] nature of most activities during the Victorian era, this cross-dressing was not marked as a homosexual activity. This said, the Barbary Coast at this time did earn the nickname of 'Sodom by the Sea' (Stryker and van Buskirk, 1996) and moreover a number of anti-vice campaigns and statutes were enacted aimed at 'cleaning up' the city (e.g. Vigilance Committees of 1851 and 1856, Police ordinances aimed at shutting down vice-dens in 1913, Red-Light Abatement Act 1914; Boyd, 1997). These campaigns, largely orchestrated by 'respectable' middle-class citizens, drew on a wide range of discourses of public hygiene, medicine and psychopathology for justification (Wright, 1999).

In the post-prohibition era, the reputation of being a city tolerant of cultural differences attracted tourists keen to observe and partake in 'exotic' behaviour and it is at this time that the first visible queer communities began to emerge. One such community was in the North Beach area, where a number of visible gay and lesbian bars had opened (at least nine lesbian nightclubs operated in the North Beach area from the 1940s through to the 1960s; Boyd, 1997). Often marketed to tourists as places of cross-dressing, Boyd (1997) suggests that the area developed a 'homosexualized' bohemian subculture. Other cruising grounds consisted of the transit stops and routes and bathhouses (Wright, 1999). These bars and cruising grounds were highly differentiated, attracting different types of clientele, so that a sophisticated set of subcultural locations existed across the city (Stryker and van Buskirk, 1996). These locations were highly classed and racialized, being the almost exclusive preserve of white gay men and lesbians. Indeed, Stryker and van Buskirk (1996) note that the first black-owned and orientated gay bar in the city, the Big Glass, did not open until 1964. Despite the development of a bar scene from the 1930s onwards it was considered by many to be at the margins of respectability and was

the on-going subject of state regulation and harassment.

The Second World War contributed significantly to the numbers of gay men and lesbians in the city (D'Emilio, 1989). Being a major seaport and centre of industry, large numbers of people passed through and moved to the city markedly altering its demography and social geography. As a consequence the number of gay bars and meeting places increased significantly. This had a number of consequences, not least of which was that San Francisco's post-war gay population increased several-fold as many of those who had passed through returned after the war ended. Many of these were ex-military personnel who had been dishonourably discharged during the war's term. Throughout the war and for the decade after the Second World War, bars came under the remit of the Armed Forces Disciplinary Control Board (AFDCB) who initiated anti-vice crackdowns in many cities, including San Francisco. By the summer of 1942 several bars and restaurants had been closed and cruising grounds such as Union Square were under surveillance (Stryker and van Buskirk, 1996). In the 1950s the AFDCB joined forces with the police and the Alcoholic Beverage Control Department (ABC) in an attempt to rid the city of, in the words of the Police Chief Gaffey, "this unwholesome and offensive situation resulting from the recent influx of undesirables" (Boyd, 1997, p. 86). This was despite a California Supreme Court ruling in 1951 that overturned the practice of closing bars that served gay clientele (Stryker and van Buskirk, 1996).

The result of increasing policing by the AFDCB, ABC and police, combined with the McCarthy witch-hunts was to push the gay community largely underground in the post-war period. This was accompanied throughout the 1950s by a number of high-profile magazines which ran articles on San Francisco's reputation as a 'haven for sexual deviates', with the emphasis changing to 'queens' and 'queers' in the 1960s. These anti-vice and sensational newspaper headlines had the paradoxical effect of publicising the city's reputation for vice whilst seeking to address such vice (Boyd, 1997). Local reports attempting to 'name and shame' bars thus unwittingly acted as directories for new migrants. By the late 1950s about 30 gay and lesbian bars existed in the city (D'Emilio, 1989).

These forms of regulation were in turn countered through resistance by the gay community and homophile organizations such as the Mattachine Society formed in the early 1950s, Daughters of Bilitis in 1955 (who were the first lesbian social and political organization in the USA), the Tavern Guild in 1962 (the first gay business association in the USA which actively challenged the ABC through the courts), the Society for Individual Rights (SIR) in 1964 (which opened a gay community centre and a hot-line), and The Council on Religion and the Homosexual in 1964 (an alliance between protestant clergy and homophile organizations). Towards the end of the 1960s, the work of such organizations was accompanied (and challenged) by more assertive and militant gay liberation organizations, such as The Committee for Homosexual Freedom, which drew inspiration from other counterculture movements. D'Emilio (1983) contends that during this period, the intertwining of strong crackdowns and provocation by the police and city administration, a growing bohemian culture and the work of activists, meant that the gay movement gained allies and a voice, while simultaneously the bars fostered the development of a self-conscious, cohesive community. Reduced to less than 20 bars in 1963, the number grew to 57 by early 1968 (D'Emilio, 1983). During the 1970s the gay community successfully used the courts and political lobbying to advance gay rights. As such, despite rhetoric over the openness of San Francisco, gay liberation in the area was achieved through picketing, publishing and public assembly (Stryker and van Buskirk, 1996). Indeed, the city's current reputation as a gay mecca, Boyd (1997) argues, is due to a successful minority-based discourse of civil

rights and sexual identity that was played out in the 1970s and 1980s and which continues today.

However, the massive influx of gay men and lesbian women into the city was not only resisted by the state but also by other members of the public. For example, in 1976, gay murders accounted for 10% of the city's homicide rate (Stryker and van Burskirk, 1996), and gay businesses were the target of arson attacks (Wright, 1999). For example, a few days after the 1977 Gay Freedom Day march, five gay businesses were bombed (D'Emilio, 1989). In 1978 Harvey Milk, the city's first openly gay politician, was murdered, and after a mild prison sentence was given to his killer, the gay community gathered at City Hall and the 'White Night riots' occurred.

The emerging visibility of the gay community meant that by 1983, Castells felt able to try and delimit gay territory in the city since the 1960s. To construct his maps he used five types of information: gay bars/venues, gay-identified businesses, voting patterns for Harvey Milk (a gay candidate), multiple male households from voter lists and key informants. He documented that gay communities were developing throughout the 1950s and 1960s, but it was only in the 1970s that these became visible centred on the Castro district and Pacific Heights. By this time San Francisco had gained a worldwide reputation as *the* city to migrate to be with other lesbians and gay men. In 1980 approximately 17% of the total population was estimated to be gay, and high gay voter registration suggested that up to 30% of those voting were gay (Hindle, 1994). By the 1990s, many of the city's districts had a gay-identified population of 25% or greater (Wright, 1999).

Manchester

As with other British cities, Manchester's gay community only began to emerge and become visible in the 1970s. Whereas those communities have remained small and confined to a few venues, Manchester's has grown to become the largest gay social scene in Britain outside of London. Prior to the 1970s the gay landscape of Manchester was highly localized and largely invisible to all but those in the know, consisting of a few coffee bars and pubs, mostly centred around two public toilets used for cottaging[6] (Whittle, 1994b). By the mid-1970s a number of gay venues had opened, concentrated to the south of the city centre in and around an area of inner-city neglect and prostitution, near to the sites of three major universities (Taylor *et al.*, 1997). Some of these were new premises, but others were older pubs which became visible after decriminalization of homosexuality (1967 Sexual Offences Act). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, this area moved from one of relative invisibility to a highly visible, well-defined locale with a high degree of spatial coherence that invited both inspection and participation (Quilley, 1997).

The nature of the venues and businesses currently occupying the 'Gay Village' are diverse, catering for different tastes and customers, and the area has undergone significant gentrification. Quilley (1997, p. 280) argues that this part of the city centre has undergone a significant 'resocialization of space', creating a 'bubble' in which different rules and conventions are accepted. The success of early visible gay venues such as Manto meant that surrounding properties have been converted into high-investment bars and restaurants (many funded by global breweries) (Skeggs, 1999). Moreover, the immediate area has been gentrified with more entertainment space and expensive loft apartments (Skeggs, 1999). Ironically, the city is now proud of the Village which it actively uses as a marketing strategy to illustrate its cosmopolitan nature. In addition, a number of 'straight' clubs now have a 'gay night'; 'It's Queer Up North' has developed as part of the city's art and music festival; and Manchester's *City Life* magazine has a gay supplement, while the *Manchester Evening News* has a weekly section (Whittle, 1994b;

Taylor *et al.*, 1997). In contrast to San Francisco, although there are substantial tracts of gay housing around and to the south of the Village area, these locations are not yet fully visible and lack enough definition to support a gay vote.

The development of a gay scene in a northern British city, known for its hegemonic masculinist mythology (Taylor *et al.*, 1997), and the slowness of such scenes to develop elsewhere, is interesting (Leeds' scene has developed significantly in recent years, and Newcastle Council has plans to develop a gay village). As is the fact that the Manchester scene is felt to be qualitatively different from that of other cities including London (Manchester is felt to be friendly and intimate, London, impersonal and dangerous; Taylor *et al.*, 1997). Hindle (1994) suggests that the development of the gay scene in Manchester needs to be placed within the specific history of gay politics in the city. He contends that two major influences were the formation of the North-Western Committee for Homosexual Law reform in the 1960s, which later became the Campaign for Homosexual Equality, which based its headquarters in Manchester, and the equal opportunities policy introduced by the radical Labour Party council on its election in 1984. The latter ensured that the Gay Centre set up in the 1970s received funding and a purpose-built centre, two Gay Liaison Officers were employed by the City Council, funding was provided to help with the gentrification of the Village area, and planning permission and new licences were granted to new bars and clubs (Whittle, 1994b). The council also provided advertising revenue that helped sustain the local gay press (Quilley, 1997).

Similarly, Quilley (1997) suggests that the emergence of the Village can be traced to the new urban left politics of the city, and the council's brief period experimenting with 'municipal socialism'. He argues that key coalitions (of which one was a rainbow-alliance) were formed in the period leading up to the Labour victory in 1984. These coalitions were aided by the movement away from revolutionary ideas at the centre of gay and lesbian liberation movements to an engagement with identity politics. Quilley (1997) goes on to argue, however, that from 1987 onwards, when the experiments with municipal socialism ended due to pressures from central government, the formation of the Village became more reliant on the adoption of a 'city chauvinist' strategy aimed at 'getting the best' for Manchester. Here, a property-led urban regeneration programme and process of re-imaging was initiated in the context of increasing rivalry between cities, the aim being to redevelop Manchester as regional, cosmopolitan, progressive capital.

Post-1987 then, the Village became part of a wider political–economic project that actively fostered entrepreneurship, gentrification and diversity. This phase of entrepreneurship was aided by the burgeoning club culture centred on the vibrant music scene of the late 1980s, which led to large numbers of new venues of all types opening across the city (Quilley, 1997; Taylor *et al.*, 1997). Gay entrepreneurs used this movement to source their investment in the Village area, near to the city centre, in an area of cheap rents and property. Their timing was also aided by the establishment of the Central Manchester Development Corporation in 1988, which helped to fund gentrification projects (repaving, lighting, cleaning buildings) in the Village and surrounding areas (Taylor *et al.*, 1996). As such, the more recent development of the gay Village has had as much to do with the imperatives of the entrepreneurial city, and the specific political–economic strategies of Manchester City Council in the late 1980s, as changing aspirations within the gay community (Quilley, 1997).

This is not to suggest that the development of a gay community has overwhelming institutional support. Indeed, some institutions have strongly resisted the gay community, notably the Greater Manchester Police Force under the leadership of Chief Constable James Anderson, who regularly raided gay venues, obstructed licence applications, and

once tried to close a gay club using an old piece of legislation that forbade 'licentious dancing' (Hindle, 1994; Whittle, 1994b). This harassment, contrary to the aims of the police, fed into politicization of gay rights in the city and organized resistance to homophobia. Whilst relations between the Force and the gay community have improved, some tensions continue to exist (Quilley, 1997). Moreover, other parts of the city are noted for being particularly homophobic (e.g. Moston).

As such, the gay space in Manchester was, and continues to be, contested within institutional contexts of State governance and local regulation, social relations between heterosexual citizens and sexual dissidents, and by social relations within the gay community. In relation to the heterosexual community, occupants and consumers of the Village are subject to homophobic attacks, mostly notably at its borders (Moran *et al.*, 2001). Moreover, with gentrification the area has become an attractive and accessible area for heterosexuals, who have come to use the area and in a sense reclaim it (Whittle, 1994b). In particular, women use the area because they can walk through it and party there without being harassed (Taylor *et al.*, 1997). The Village is thus being selectively used by heterosexual women as a place of escape from heterosexual space (Skeggs, 1999). Skeggs notes that part of the problem is that in many cases heterosexual women feel invited as welcome participants due to the press coverage of events in the area. Moreover, straight trendy clubbers attend the clubs which often have high-profile DJs. Quilley (1997) also suggests that the Village is allowing gay sexuality to be exploited as an urban spectacle (as with some gay bars in early 20th-century US cities, where folk went to watch the 'pansies'—see Chauncey, 1995). Skeggs (personal communication), however, suggests on the basis of a census survey of the Village area conducted on a Friday night that the reclaiming is at best only partial as gay and heterosexual are occupying quite different venues.

In relation to regulation by the gay community itself, the Village is used predominantly by young, white males with money, who use the space strategically and selectively (i.e. for pleasure but not business meetings). The space is therefore racialized and to a degree regulated by class, with poorer working-class males to some extent excluded from its sexual economy (in 1996 to counter the need for cash in the Village a 'cottage' developed in a disused warehouse just to the south of the area; Taylor *et al.*, 1997). Moreover, whilst lesbians do make some use of the Village and do consider it to be 'their space', it is often not considered a lesbian space by gay men and heterosexual women. As such, lesbians usually restrict themselves to a few select venues including the first lesbian bar, Vanilla, opened in 1998. Interestingly, Manchester's other lesbian club, Follies, is near to, but outside, the area that has been gentrified (Skeggs, 1999).

Belfast

In the 1970s, at the same time that San Francisco was rapidly becoming a gay Mecca, and Manchester's gay, commercial ventures were growing and its gay community becoming more visible, gay life in Belfast was severely limited. This is not to say that subcultures and networks did not exist, but that they were highly hidden from view and strongly policed by state and wider society.

Conrad (1998, 2001), McClenaghan (1995), Mulholland (1995) and Quinn (2000) all note that heterosexism in Northern Ireland is underpinned and cross-cut by ideologies which sustain sectarianism, namely religious doctrine that vilifies sexual dissidents as having an 'objective disorder' and nationalist and political discourse (both Unionist and Nationalist) that draws from this doctrine and feeds into institutional ideology and practice. Both the Catholic Church and the various Protestant denominations remain fundamentally opposed to same-sex relationships, privileging the sanctity of the family,

the ethics of pro-life and warning of the sins of homosexuality (Anderson and Kitchin, 2000). This strong link between church and state has sustained a morally conservative society, as reflected in the fact that Northern Ireland is the only place in the UK where abortion is still illegal, that it has a higher age of consent than elsewhere in the UK, and that policing until very recently was unsympathetic and hostile, with active pursuance of entrapment and public prosecution (McVeigh, 1994; Cahill, 1995; Conrad, 1998). This has fed into and legitimated widespread homophobia throughout society.

Against this backdrop, influenced by the gay liberation movement elsewhere, the Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association (NIGRA) formed in 1972. It actively started to campaign for decriminalization of homosexuality, which had occurred in England and Wales in 1967. This campaign was met with strong political and public opposition, particularly from the Democratic Unionist Party, which organized a counter 'Save Ulster from Sodomy' campaign. Without success in Northern Ireland and the UK, in 1978 one of NIGRA's members Jeff Duggeon took a case to the European Court of Human Rights which ruled in 1981, after a lengthy case, that decriminalization must take place. In 1982, homosexuality was decriminalized, and shortly afterwards 'The Carpenters' became Belfast's first recognized gay bar.

Since decriminalization, the DUP and Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) have remained opposed to homosexuality. And, while both Nationalist parties have anti-homophobic policies — Sein Fein added a one-line anti-discrimination policy in 1980 (McClenaghan, 1995) — they have generally resisted pursing sexual rights for fear of alienating more conservative constituency members (Conrad, 1998), especially given the perception that to be republican one is also "Catholic, nationalist and very much the upholder of 'traditional family values' as dictated by the Catholic Church" (McClenaghan, 1995, p. 124). In addition, the development of opposing paramilitary organizations throughout the period associated with 'the troubles' (1969 onwards) has fostered a form of homophobic, hyper-masculinity. These organizations have engaged in acts of policing local communities for what it views as anti-social behaviour. Sexual dissidence has been seen by certain organizations, operating within some localities, to represent anti-social activity. Those who have been rumoured, or proven to be gay, or indeed involved in prostitution, have come under pressure to leave tightly knit, local communities, and in many cases forcibly evicted. Moreover, paramilitaries have targeted gay venues. For example, in the early 1990s, a Protestant policeman was targeted and killed by Republicans in a city-centre gay venue. After the ceasefires, a Loyalist gang attacked another gay venue, in what was generally viewed as an extortion bid, leaving one customer in a serious condition in hospital.

By the early 1990s, the gay population had started to become slightly more visible. The 'Crow's Nest' and 'Parliament' had replaced 'The Carpenters' and several pubs held gay or lesbian nights. These bars were situated in the marginal, 'no-go' area of the centre of the city or to the south of the city centre, in the more 'neutral' zone occupied by the university. In 1991, the first Pride march was held, picketed by the DUP (and every year since). From the mid-1990s, and the time of the first ceasefires, several politically aware organizations, such as Queer Space, Coalition on Sexual Orientation and The Rainbow Project formed, joining NIGRA and the services CARA friend and Lesbian Line. These groups opened offices, sought state funding, and lobbied statuary agencies for sexual rights and services. And a new gay nightclub, 'The Kremlin', opened.

Moreover, since the ceasefires a new legislative climate has emerged with an Equality Commission established which campaigns for a more inclusive society, and the introduction of a whole series of anti-discrimination legislation (e.g. Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order

1998, Disability Discrimination Act 1995, Northern Ireland Act (1998), Equality (Disability, etc.) (Northern Ireland) Order 2000). As yet, however, sexual orientation is only covered explicitly in the Northern Ireland Act (1998) when an obligation was placed on public authorities to promote equality of opportunity. In addition, the Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) (1999) provides legal rights for those who have transformed their gender through 'medical supervision' (clause 2(1)). The Protection from Harassment Act (1997) has not been extended to Northern Ireland. As a consequence, discrimination in relation to sexual orientation is one of the few aspects of identity politics not covered by legal redress (with the exception of public authorities). It is hoped that it will be covered in a new Equality Bill, currently being drafted. Further, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (now Northern Ireland Police Service) introduced a Force Order (July 2000) addressing homophobic incidents, has appointed a Community Affairs Sergeant responsible for liaison with the 'gay and lesbian community' in each of its 38 divisions, and has started to liaise with gay organizations about such issues as cruising.

What is clear from interviewing 30 sexual dissidents who took part in the study that prompted this paper is that while these developments, along with a general liberalization of society, have led to significant changes, Belfast continues to be a heterosexist city. Homophobic intimidation and violence, either perceived or real, remains a significant problem, so that all but a couple of respondents continue to be 'closeted' from different family members or wider society, using carefully orchestrated patterns of spatial behaviour to protect themselves from perceived risks (see Kitchin and Lysaght, in press). And the vast majority had experienced homophobia, although there were significant variations in rates, forms and effects across interviewees (tellingly, those with little experience of homophobia were those who were most 'closeted'). So that

while institutional structures are changing, visible resistance is becoming more common and self-regulatory strategies remain strong.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have sought to illustrate how a Foucaultian analysis, tracing out historical geographies of San Francisco, Manchester and Belfast, helps us to understand the complex, contingent and contested ways in which regulatory, discursive and material processes enacted by state and citizens, and operating at different scales (region, nation), are grounded locally in particularized ways; that the local nuances created through varying social, economic and political context and events create contingent and relational systems of regulation, self-regulation and resistance that manifest themselves in differing sexual productions of space. Such a Foucaultian analysis, I contend, reveals that there is nothing inevitable or fated in the sexual production of space, nor is there a set, or universal, process underpinning the making of non-heterosexual space in different locations.

While maintaining its reputation as a wide-open town, it is clear that gay space and rights within San Francisco have been fiercely contested throughout the city's history, and shaped by individual agency, institutional structures, wider political–economic concerns, and resistive practices. In Manchester, legislative changes, the development of a gay movement, strong political support by city administrators and the investment tactics of gay entrepreneurs have created a gay commercial zone, but not a visible residential zone. Strong religious and sectarian discourses have stifled the gay movement in Belfast and it is only with the ceasefires that wider changes have started to occur, although progress has been slow and hampered by institutional and individual homophobia.

While it is important then to trace out macro-scale changes in policy and societal attitudes, it is equally important to acknowledge and trace out the structural and individ-

ual contingencies of local histories in order to understand the particularized production of space and why sexual rights and freedoms, while displaying similarities, vary between locales.

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Notes

1   The work in this paper was undertaken as part of an ESRC-funded project on 'Mapping the spaces of fear: the socio-spatial processes of violence in Northern Ireland', award no. L133251007.
2   We use the term sexual dissidents to refer to individuals who do not perform as 'good' heterosexuals, for example, gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and heterosexuals who practise 'deviant' sexual acts such as sadomasochism, bondage and so on (see Rubin, 1989). As such, we recognize that 'sexual dissidents' are very heterogeneous in sexual identification.
3   Heteronormativity is the set of discourses that essentializes and reproduces those adopting sexual roles or seeking sexual experiences that do not conform to 'good' heterosexuality (e.g. monogamous, procreative sexuality) as deviant, unnatural, abnormal and immoral.
4   Clearly there is a need to examine the intersections of the development of heterosexuality, non-heteronormative heterosexuality (e.g. prostitution) and gay spaces within a city. This is beyond the confines of this paper, however. Focusing on the sexual production of gay space, though, reveals how the sexual production of space is particularized across cities.
5   Homosocial refers to activities and events undertaken or attended by only males or females.
6   Cottaging refers to the practice of men seeking sexual partners in public toilets.

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